St. Louis Audubon Society

Tale Feathers

VOLUME 65, NUMBER 5 OCTOBER 1998

Enjoy October Picnic at Shaw Arboretum

by Jim Holsen

Remember that St. Louis Audubon's fall picnic will be held at the Adlyne Freund Education Center at the Shaw Arboretum in Gray Summit on Sunday, October 18. **Be sure to note the directions given below**.

October is one of the most pleasant months in Missouri's Ozark foothills—clear, sharp days with the hint of winter to come, but still warm and pleasant in the sun. All Audubon members are invited to meet their friends and renew their acquaintance with the prairies and wetlands at the Arboretum. Come between 2 pm and dusk, plan to visit the prairie in the afternoon, enjoy an outdoor meal around 5 pm, and after dinner and before dusk, join Dr. James Trager on a stroll along the boardwalk surrounding the nearby wetlands.

Paul and Mary Dueren will grill hot dogs and hamburgers, and Audubon will provide soft drinks. Bring a dish to share with others, along with any other drinks that you may prefer for yourself.

Paul and Mary will need to know how many are coming so they can buy supplies. Please call Jim or Margot Holsen at 822-0410 with your reservation by Wednesday, October 14. Call early to help us plan ahead.

Directions: The Adlyne Freund Education Center is on Gray Summit Road. Visitors to the Freund Center do **not** enter the Arboretum and do **not** pay the usual admission fee. The Arboretum is in Gray Summit, about 23 miles west of the I-44/I-270 intersection near Kirkwood. At Gray Summit, exit and turn left on the overpass. After crossing over I-44, turn right onto the outer highway (Hwy 100), but then immediately turn left on Gray Summit Road, which runs along the eastern edge of the Arboretum. Continue for about 1.5 miles to a sign on twin posts at the Center's entrance.

General Membership Meeting at Zoo to be Great Event for Families

by Sara Lenoe

All are welcome to join St. Louis Audubon at the St. Louis Zoo for a general membership meeting on Sunday, November 1, at 2 pm. This event should be especially appealing to Audubon families since a behind-the-scenes tour of the new Children's Zoo is included in the day's events.

The meeting will begin in the Monsanto Lecture Theater on the lower level of the Living World with a brief slide presentation on the Zoo's new field conservation program. This segment should last about 25 minutes and is presented by Zoo staff member Eric Miller, DVM, Director of Animal Health and Conservation.

Afterwards, the group will be treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Emerson Electric Children's Zoo, which just reopened this spring.

We hope to see a lot of St. Louis Auduboners and their families at this exciting event.

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Fall Birding Offers Local and Out-of-Town Adventures

by Jim Malone

Although it still feels like summer in St. Louis, we are already well into fall (migration that is). This season of migration for shorebirds, warblers, and others is a great time to test your identification skills in the field. South-bound warblers may not be singing, and they don't wear their best courting clothes, but they are moving much slower, often allowing good opportunities for study. Fall shorebirds appear drab brown or gray, and all seem to look the same, but the time you spend studying them now will forever aid in your understanding of their important field marks.

Fall is also a good time to be on the lookout for western migrants that got their directions a bit confused. Whether their directional problems are due to hurricane winds blowing them off course or simply going the wrong way on their first migration, these birds are scattered across the country this time of year.

During the fall of 1998, the St. Louis Audubon Society is offering birding trips to several great locations in or near the immediate area. Our first October trip to Lake Carlyle on October 3 will probably have taken place by the time you read this. Although high summer water levels at Carlyle made it look like shorebird habitat would be scarce this year, the impoundment area near parking lot #3 has become a real hotbed of activity. We should expect to see several species of shorebirds, early waterfowl, and gulls on this trip, as well as some warblers in the woods at Hazlett State Park.

On the weekend of October 10-11, we will have our first out-of-town birding trip of the year. This weekend we will be visiting the Ted Shanks Conservation Area north of Louisiana, Missouri. This site, nestled along the Mississippi River, consists of extensive floodplain wetlands and dense forests, interspersed with streams, ponds, and lakes.

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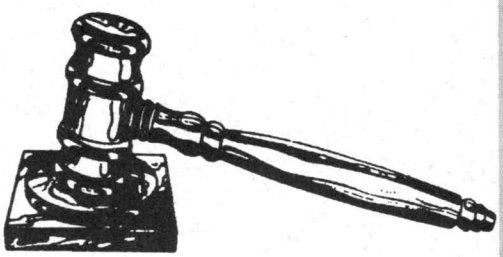


From Your President

by Jim Holsen

Cedar Waxwing Added to Collection

Bill Brandhorst has added an immature Cedar Waxwing to St. Louis Audubon's collection of mounted birds. Mounting was done by Carl Schwarz at the Schwarz Studio. As with earlier specimens, Bill contributed the handmade case. Thanks to Bill for this addition to the collection, which is used for educational purposes and at public events.

WGNSS Donates Bubbler to Forest Park

Visitors to the Gaddy Bird Garden in the northwest corner of Tower Grove Park are familiar with the bubbler donated in memory of Karl Boldt by the Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS). An opening in the dished surface of a large boulder serves as a small fountain or bubbler with a supply of water that attracts wildlife to the woody area that used to be known as the brush pile. During migration the bubbler attracts a variety of warblers, thrushes, and other migrants, helping to make Tower Grove Park one of the best birding spots in the area.

Now WGNSS has donated a second bubbler to be placed in Forest Park in the vicinity of the parking circle off Wells Drive, just west of the Zoo. This is the area with newly renovated restrooms at the entrance to the new handicapped accessible trail constructed last year by the Missouri Department of Conservation. This bubbler is donated in memory of Dick Anderson, a veteran St. Louis birder and 1 of the 5 authors of the recently published book *BIRDS OF THE ST. LOUIS AREA: Where and When to Find Them*. Mike Flieg, operator of Rustic Landscaping and also a local birder, will oversee the installation.

Get to Know . . . **Christy Beckmann**

(This is the twenty-fifth in a series of articles written about and by St. Louis Audubon board members themselves so that all our membership can be better acquainted with our decision makers on the board.)

My 9-year-old daughter and I were on our 10th day of a disappointing spring vacation in the Panamanian rainforest.

Very little of what we anticipated had actually happened on our trip. The lodge in which we were to stay was not finished, and our group was virtually camping in a hot, mildewed, thatched grass hut, elevated on stilts 7 feet above the tarantulas' habitat. A local cook made meals for us on an open fire, but there wasn't much refrigeration or cool drinks. Our makeshift showers consisted of diverted river water, with privacy provided by pieces of black plastic. Our sole morning designated for birding along legendary Pipeline Road hadn't begun until 10 am, so we hadn't seen much.

In the late afternoon that particular day, we were hot, sweaty, and a little bit bored as we waited for group decisions on our next activity. Standing with Anya on the bank of the Rio Chagres, very near our camp, we heard a bird occasionally calling a monotonous series of hooting notes. It was difficult to calculate where this bird actually was since the sounds seemed to come from a ventriloquist.

She looked up into a large tree, and perched quietly on a middle branch in full view was a brightly colored bird with a long, square-tipped tail. A trogon—an elegant trogon! Without our binoculars, we watched as the bird fluttered away to pluck more fruit, and we knew we had seen a special bird. Though both of us have now logged onto our life lists 4 other trogon species as well as the ultimate trogonidae, the resplendent Quetzal, seeing that 1 bird helped compensate for the rest of the trip and re-kindled my interest in the continual treasure hunt of bird watching. (We have since taken 5 other spring break nature trips, each superb.)

When I was my daughter's age growing up in Kirkwood, my parents surrounded me with opportunities in the natural world: local crayfishing, relocating rabbit nests, examining the soda straw-like tongues of hummingbirds that had died by hitting our large glass windows, catching all kinds of insects, and identifying local wildflowers.

Now that I am a parent, too, I regularly make time from a demanding job for butterfly counts, mushroom forays at Mingo Swamp, prairie gardening, and various herpetological adventures. Birding, however, has proven to be the most regularly rewarding of nature studies. In addition to studying the secret lives of local species, I have made recent trips to Costa Rica, mainland Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Baja, Belize, and Hawaii, which have all included time for watching birds.

(Christy Beckmann is Vice President, Public Affairs, for Solutia Inc., the chemical company spinoff from Monsanto, and President of Solutia Fund, its philanthropic arm. She is St. Louis Audubon Society's link to the Missouri Environmental Fund, where she is also a board member.)

Operation Clean Stream— Once Again a Success!

by Jerry Castillon

It was a beautiful late summer day—a great day to canoe on the river and help spruce up its environs. The St. Louis Audubon group once again participated in the annual Operation Clean Stream project. This was the 31st year for this event, and we have been part of it for many of them. This event has expanded from the clean-up of the Meramec River to include the Bourbeuse, Big, Huzzah, and Courtois Streams.

Our section was to be the area near Steelville, but due to time concerns and long highway travel, we did a section from Catawissa to Pacific Palisades near Pacific. We put in 6 canoes with 11 participants. This section was longer than anticipated with very little current in many regions. This stretch may not have been cleaned recently, for there was more trash than we could haul. The river was up a little, but we still were able to fill all of the canoes with trash by the time we reached the end of our trip. The trash included about 18 tires, a washing machine, and many other ultra-lower-class garage sale items.

Many thanks go to the hard-working students who helped us more experienced trash grabbers. We all had a great time, and we're sure the future river users will be grateful.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Audubon Birding Trips

Bring binoculars, bird field guide, & dress for field conditions & weather. Coaching & instruction for all levels. For confirmation & more information, call trip leaders Paul Bauer (H# 921-3972) or Jim Malone (H# 536-1119).

Carlyle Lake — *Saturday, October 3*, at 8 am. Area provides best waterfowl, gulls, shorebirds, migrating sparrows, & raptors that fall migration has to offer. Meet in McDonald's parking lot at intersection of routes 127 & 50 in Carlyle, Il. For other details of full-day trip, see related birding article on pages 1 & 3.

Ted Shanks Conservation Area — *Saturday & Sunday, October 10 & 11*, at 8 am. Area is great locale for shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, & passerines. Meet at Ted Shanks office. For other important details of this weekend trip, see related birding article on pages 1 & 3.

Riverlands — *Saturday, November 7*, at 8 am. One of the finest year-round locations for birding in the local area. In St. Charles County near Alton, Il. Take Hwy 367 north of I-270, across Missouri River to right on last road before Mississippi River. Go east from gas station; turn right on first road to Teal Pond parking lot. See related birding article on pages 1 & 3.

Riverlands — *Sunday, November 15*, at 8 am. See waterfowl and wintering sparrows and gulls. See directions in above entry. See related birding article on pages 1 & 3.

Horseshoe Lake — *Saturday, December 5*, at 9 am. Site is typically good for viewing waterfowl, gulls and raptors. Take I-55/70 east of St. Louis to north on Hwy 111. Go through park entrance to HQ building.

Audubon-Related Activities

Audubon All-Member Picnic — *Sunday, October 18*, from 2 to 8 pm. Held at Freund Center of Shaw Arboretum. To make reservations by October 14, call Jim or Margot Holsen, H# 822-0410. For more info., see related article on page 1.

Audubon Bird Seed Sale — *Saturday, October 24*, from 10 am to 3 pm. Held at Green Center in University City. See additional info. & order form on page 5.

General Membership Meeting at St. Louis Zoo — *Sunday, November 1*, at 2 pm. Slide presentation on Zoo's new field conservation program followed by behind-the-scenes tour of Children's Zoo. Audubon families welcome. See related article on page 1.

Holiday Open House with WGNSS — *Sunday, December 6*, from 1 to 4 pm, at Tyson Research Center. For details, call Jim Holsen, H# 822-0410, or Vicki Flier, H# 968-9166.

Special Events

Resource Center Network Open House — *Thursday, October 15*, from 3 to 5 pm, at Powder Valley Nature Center. Education departments of various institutions are available with resource materials for educators & other interested people. For more info., call Judy Higgins at 301-1500, ext. 2229.

Day in the Forest — *Sunday, October 18*, at Rockwoods Conservation Area. For more info., call Rockwoods at 458-2236 or Powder Valley at 301-1500.

World Ecology Day — *Friday, October 23,* from 8:30 am to 2 pm. Held at University of Missouri-St. Louis. For more info., call Bernadette Dalton at 516-6203.

Missouri Environmental Education Association Conference — *Friday through Sunday, November 6-8*, at Tan-Tar-A Resort. For more info., call Sue Smith, H# 256-7986, or Patti Redel at Powder Valley Nature Center, 301-1500, ext.2234.

Missouri Environmental Fund — *Saturday, November 7.* Board meeting & video conference. For more info., call Jerry Klamon or Laura Neuman at 771-6668.

Fall Birding Offers . . . Adventures

from page 1

With this diversity of habitat, we can expect a blend of waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, and anything that might venture in off the Mississippi. For this trip, we will be staying overnight in Louisiana on Saturday, then returning via Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Reserve in Annada, Missouri, and possibly B. K. Leech Memorial Wildlife Area on Sunday. If time permits and the birding has been good there, we may cross over the Mississippi and pick up a couple of good wildlife areas on the Illinois side of the river. We are asking for a $5 per person fee from those attending this weekend trip and also request that you contact Jim Malone at 314/536-1119 for information about lodging and the itinerary for this trip. Please call soon, so you will be able to make room reservations.

In November, we will have 2 local bird walks (November 7 and 15) at the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area. This location needs no introduction to most of the St. Louis birders, mainly because it is consistently one of the finest year-round locations for bird watching in the area. This time of year, we should expect large numbers and a good variety of waterfowl and increasing populations of wintering sparrows. The first waves of wintering gulls should be here by mid-November as well, and we might be fortunate enough to find some early wintering raptors like Rough-legged Hawks or Short-eared Owls!

All of these trips promise to be filled with good company and great birding in some of the finest locations the region can offer. If you haven't joined us before, you should know that we have a number of capable leaders (and group participants) on these walks who are happy to help people new to birding (or the area) get oriented. Our aim is always to help everyone have a chance to see every bird and learn how to recognize them on their own. Please join us!

The Conservation Corner

Corps Considers New Water Control Policies for the Missouri River

by Jim Holsen

At the time of Lewis and Clark, the Missouri River was described as possessing abundant braided channels, riparian lands, chutes, sloughs, islands, sandbars, and backwater areas, one of North America's most diverse ecosystems. Today the river bears no relationship to the Big Muddy of those early days. Six dams built in Montana, North and South Dakota, and Nebraska under the Pick/Sloan Plan of 1944 have impounded one third of the river. Below Sioux City, Iowa, the river has been channelized to support barge navigation, which has little economic benefit, compared to such other activities as flood control, power generation, water supply, and recreation.

In 1994 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed a revised Master Water Control Policy for the Missouri River that favored wildlife habitat—with relatively large releases of water in the spring to simulate the spring floods that activate breeding behavior in fish and other wildlife. The plan provided for larger quantities of water to be held in the reservoirs during the summer months to benefit recreation in the upstream states—necessitating a shortened navigation (barging) season in the fall in the downstream states.

Farmers, barge owners, and barge suppliers were incensed and voiced their displeasure in public hearings in St. Louis and other cities. The Corps went back to the drawing board and has now come up with a series of 8 alternatives favoring navigation, conservation, and fish and wildlife resources in various degrees.

As St. Louis Audubon considered the 1994 proposal, it seemed at first that the river could be managed for navigational and wildlife resources at the same time. But more detailed consideration showed that the channelization and water control policies necessary to support navigation were incompatible with the measures necessary to benefit recreational and wildlife resources. Unfortunately, not 1 of the 8 alternatives proposed by the Corps considers the elimination of navigation on the Missouri. Yet, if you cross the Boone (Hwy 40/I-64) or Blanchette (I-70) bridges, how many times do you see tows on the river? Why is the river still being managed for navigation?

By the Corps' own figures, the economic benefits of navigation are less than $7 million per year, as opposed to recreational benefits of $85 to 90 million, water supply benefits of $540 million, flood control benefits of $410 million, and hydropower benefits of $680 million. Half of the navigation tonnage on the river is attributed to the Corps, hauling rock for wing dikes and other navigation structures.

Public hearings on the new proposals will be held in 13 cities during October and November. The hearing in St. Louis will be held at the Holiday Inn Forest Park, 5915 Wilson Avenue, on Tuesday, November 17. Hours have not been given.

Those interested can obtain copies of the Summary of the Preliminary RDEIS (Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement), Master Water Control Manual, Missouri River, from:

Patti Lee
Missouri River Region
12565 West Center Road
Omaha, Nebraska 68144-3869
Telephone: 402/697-2528

On the Web, contact **www.mrd.army.mil/cemrr/pa/master-manual.html**.

Forest Park Savanna Project Underway

by Jim Holsen

Last year Audubon, the Webster Groves Nature Study Society, the Open Space Council, the Missouri Prairie Foundation, and many individuals donated funds to restore a savanna demonstration area in Forest Park. Ken Cohen, coordinator for the project, has stated that work is now underway on 5 acres near Kennedy Forest, on land adjacent to Skinker Boulevard.

The savanna will be a demonstration area for school children and visitors, a reminder of what much of our Ozark foothills looked like in presettlement times.

Gary Schimmelpfenig, formerly with the Shaw Arboretum and now with DJM Ecosystems, will manage the restoration. Preliminary clearing, mowing, and herbicide treatment were accomplished during the late summer months. Seed drilling and hand raking will be completed in December and January. Prairie seeds need the shock of a sharp cold spell to activate them for the spring growing season.

In the meantime, Gary is in need of volunteers to collect specific varieties of seeds to augment those that will be purchased. Volunteers are needed at the Shaw Arboretum on Saturday, October 10, and at the Gordon Moore Prairie near Godfrey, Illinois, on Saturday, October 24. Volunteers will collect seeds of 1 or 2 species at a time, placing them in labeled paper bags. Gary will provide instruction, so no previous experience is necessary. A seed processing day will be held in November.

Gary insists that if one wants to learn about anything, to understand it, as in this case a presettlement savanna, one must work with it, restore it, and make it work. This is such an opportunity.

Gary emphasizes that human intervention has been an important factor in shaping our landscape from the earliest times. Native Americans used fire and grazing to control growth. Now we must also control exotic species introduced daily. The goal of restoration is to recreate as nearly as possible the essentials of a functional ecosystem, a structure that will enable species to interact and maintain biodiversity into the future, generating new species along the way.

Call Ken Cohen (H# 725-1147) if you can participate in this effort.

Page Avenue Freeway—and More Congestion

by Jim Holsen

"If you spend enough time around people whose business is transportation, sooner or later you will hear 2 truisms: 'You can't build your way out of congestion,' and 'The era of road building is over—it's now time to manage what we've got.'"

Those who agree with this quote from Hank Dittmar, Director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project, can volunteer their time to Taxpayers Against Page Freeway. Both time and donations are urgently needed to maintain the campaign for the November 3 Page Avenue referendum on the St. Louis County ballot. Call Scott Mills at 727-0600 for information.

The St. Louis Audubon Society
Bird Seed Sale

Last Chance!

Last Chance!

Saturday, October 24, 10 am to 3 pm
Green Center—next to Kaufman Park
8025 Blackberry Avenue University City, St. Louis

The St. Louis Audubon Society is again conducting a bird seed sale to benefit the chapter's conservation and education programs. Get your supply of bird seed from St. Louis Audubon—encourage your friends, neighbors, and relatives to makes orders, also.

This year 4 different seed types are available: 25-lb. and 50-lb. bags of black oil-type sunflower seed, 25-lb. and 50-lb. bags of premium mix bird seed, 10-lb. bags of thistle/niger seed, and 25-lb. and 50-lb. bags of safflower seed.

To order, please complete the order form below. **You will need to pick up your bird seed on October 24 at the Green Center between 10 am and 3 pm, or your seed will be forfeited and resold**. One week prior to the sale, a postcard will be sent to you to verify that your order and check were received and to remind you of the pick-up place and time.

If you have any questions, please call Dianne Johnson (H# 458-4369) or Sue Smith (H# 256-7986). **Your order and check must be received by October 17**. Checks will not be cashed until after the pick-up date.

(Please detach here; mail bottom portion along with your check.)

BIRD SEED ORDER FORM

(Please print)
Name _____ Phone (day)_____ (eve)_____

Address_____

# of 25-lb. bags sunflower seed	_____	X $9 @ =	_____
# of 50-lb. bags sunflower seed	_____	X $15 @ =	_____
# of 25-lb. bags premium mix	_____	X $8 @ =	_____
# of 50-lb. bags premium mix	_____	X $14 @ =	_____
# of 10-lb. bags thistle/niger	_____	X $11 @ =	_____
# of 25-lb. bags safflower	_____	X $13 @ =	_____
# of 50-lb. bags safflower	_____	X $24 @ =	_____

Total Amount (check enclosed) _____

Mail order & check to:
Bird Seed
Sue Smith
1512 Virginia
Ellisville, MO 63011

(Mail early to ensure receipt of order by October 17—THANKS!)

Please make checks payable to:
St. Louis Audubon Society

Please feel free to photocopy this form and circulate it to your friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

Thanks to the people who have already placed their orders!

What is Café Audubon???

Café Audubon is the first certified, shade-grown organic coffee. About a year ago, National Audubon, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, and Eco Organic Coffee Company joined together to create this unique product. Café Audubon is helping protect migratory birds and their habitats by encouraging farmers to continue to grow coffee under the diverse shade of the rainforest canopy.

Since the 1970's, coffee plantations have met head-on with agricultural modernization. Farmers began eliminating traditional shade canopy farms for "sun farms" (technified plantations) which can produce 3 times the crop of a traditional shade plantation. Unfortunately, this conversion from "shade coffee" to "sun coffee" has a price.

As the shade trees have fallen, so has the United States' population of migratory birds. Millions of familiar backyard birds such as hummingbirds, orioles, warblers, and more migrate south to Central and South America for the winter. Without the trees that provide the necessary fruit, insects, and shelter needed from winter resting grounds, some migratory birds die while others lack the energy to reproduce.

But now, the National Audubon Society, in a licensing agreement with Eco Organic Coffee Company, is making a conscious effort to protect biodiversity and delicate tropical ecosystems in a powerful alliance called Café Audubon. Café Audubon is organically grown on small, traditional farms beneath a lush canopy of shade trees that provide food and shelter for thousands of migratory birds. This type of farming protects the soil from erosion, eliminates the need for pesticides, and creates a great tasting cup of coffee.

The kind of coffee you drink can make a difference! To place orders or obtain more information, please contact Eco Organic Coffee Company by phone at 888/326-2633, by email at **organic@ecocoffee.com**, or on the Internet at **http://www.ecocoffee.com.**

AUDUBON ADVENTURES

The Education Corner

Upcoming Attractions for Teachers

The **Resource Center Network Open House** will be held on Thursday, October 15, from 3 to 5 pm at Powder Valley Nature Center. In addition to our local Audubon chapter, organizations such as the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Science Center, and the St. Louis Zoo and others will present information on programs, resources, and activities to community teachers, youth group leaders, and home schoolers. Call Sue Smith (H# 256-7986) for more information.

The third annual **Missouri Environmental Conference** will be held Friday through Sunday, November 6, 7, and 8, at Tan-Tar-A Resort at Lake of the Ozarks. Contact Sue Smith (H# 256-7986) for more information.

St. Louis Audubon is Still Online.....

by Jim Malone

As many of you know, the St. Louis Audubon Society has been operating a Web site on the Internet since the beginning of 1998. This site contains information about chapter events, field trips, special meetings, membership information, and some resource information for birding in the St. Louis area. Most of the comments from those who have visited the site have been positive, but we have suffered our growing pains in the last few months as well.

Our Web site is located on a server belonging to the National Audubon Society (which is generous enough to offer it for free), and the demands on this instrument have grown significantly in the past few months. This increase in Internet traffic made it necessary to replace the server with an upgraded, faster unit. During the transition time from one server to the new one, a number of changes were made to provide local chapters with better service and fewer interruptions.

I hope those of you who came to depend on the Web site for current birding information through postings of the Tyson Nature Line (a local rare bird alert line) and for electronic copies of the latest *Tale Feathers* newsletter will accept my apologies for their late or missing nature.

Now, the growing pains are behind us, and the Web site has been updated to contain the 1998-1999 events/meetings calendar and the latest postings of sightings and newsletters. This year, we hope to add more hotlinks to related sites and lots of pictures to make things more interesting. Trip reports will be added to the birding section, in addition to other seasonal birding information.

So, if you visited the Web site in the past or even if you haven't, drop by on occasion and see how we are changing. The St. Louis Audubon Society Web site is located at **http://www.audubon.org/chapter/mo/SLAS/**.

Millers Attend NAS Convention in Colorado

by Mary Lou Miller

In July Jerry and I, along with over 700 other registrants, attended the 1998 National Audubon Society Convention with the theme "Celebrating Successes," held at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. This YMCA is located in a picturesque mountain valley just outside Estes Park. We had rain only 1 day, and that was even a pleasant rain with clouds hanging in the mountains around the valley.

The convention program was grouped into categories such as Audubon center and sanctuaries; bird conservation: solutions through citizen science; birding festivals, trails, and economics; chapter leadership and organizational effectiveness; educational opportunities through Audubon; electronic communications; international Audubon programs; and national issue campaigns. Under these were many different classes to choose from. In between these classes were plenary sessions of all morning, afternoon, or evening. There were also special summits held on subjects like wetlands, forests, population and habitat, and general campaign advocacy skills.

Various special speakers were highlights of the convention. I have been following National Audubon's ocean program, so I was most pleased to hear and meet Carl Safina, Director of NAS Marine Conservation, who presented "Audubon's Living Ocean Program." John Flicker, NAS President, delivered a message titled "Let's All Celebrate Successes." And it was especially delightful to hear our new Chief of the U.S. Forest Service Michael Dombeck state how he is working to bring new policy to our national forests. He got a standing ovation.

Other celebrations took place, one of which was commemorating Hazel Wolf's first hundred years. She has been to most past Audubon conventions and is a delight to all. Time was also devoted to chapter newsletter awards, NAS wildlife refuge awards, the Bushnell Conservationist of the Year Award, NAS Refuge Campaign "Next Generation Awards," Birdathon awards, and the Charles Callison Awards.

Between Jerry and me, we managed to bring home a box of handouts for our officers and committee chairs from the booths set up by various Audubon chapters, National Audubon, corporations, special programs, other environmental groups, and government departments. The YMCA gift shop also sold a variety of Audubon products from different companies or from National Audubon itself.

Jerry and I learned the most from sessions on the national refuge system and on new approaches to education. One class I attended focused on helping national wildlife refuges in our own chapter area. Since we have been approached by 2 different refuges in the St. Louis area, I wanted to know how to become more involved with these refuges. We discovered that ***Audubon Adventures***, the NAS educational newsletter for schools, has changed quite a bit. The whole year's information and packets come as 1 unit in the early fall to the teachers. They can then decide when and how to use the material. NAS is using computers more and more in its educational goals with schools; also, special campaigns are using computers to gain information from people all across the nation.

Over and over again, the words *birds, wildlife*, and *habitat* came into the conversations. These were generally the themes of the convention along with *celebrating successes*. Probably one of the most beneficial things we gained from attending the convention was a new energy, strength, and spirit as we go into another year of Audubon activities. We also hope that we brought enough information back with us to pass along to others to help in our education and conservation endeavors. Please call Jerry or Mary Lou Miller at H# 389-3969 for any specific information from the conference.

On the Trail of the Curlew

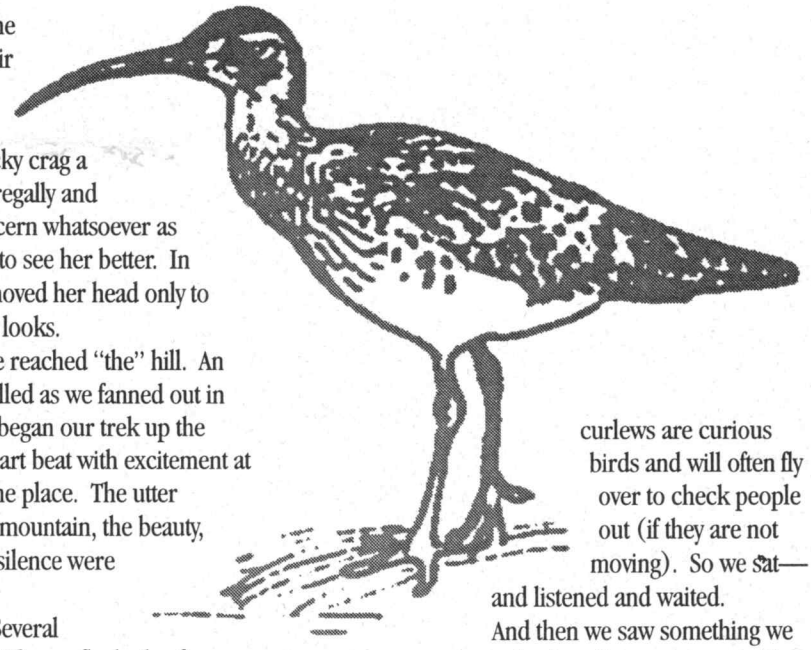
by Joan Hendrickson

I wanted to see a Bristle-thighed Curlew. There was no way I was going to miss. I checked the birding company itineraries. I read all the maps where I could find the curlew. I read all the right books, boned up on field marks, listened to call tapes, visualized seeing that bird. I counted on seeing the darn thing. I was ready! It had been on the same mountain side for weeks—I couldn't miss!

I booked a birding tour that gave me 3 full days in the Nome, Alaska, area. The logbook in the Nome Visitor Center showed that every birding tour group so far this year had seen the bird. Everyone I talked to in Nome had seen the bird. One of my guides had seen it just a month ago. All good omens! The place to look was on a mountain side 30 miles up the Kougarok Road—off to the right.

The day dawned bright and clear—another good sign—especially in Nome. Off we bounced on the coast road out of Nome. A tundra pond produced a family of Red-throated Loons: mom, pop, and junior between them. The next pond housed a family of Pacific Loons, mom and pop each with a downy chick aboard their backs. After a turn on the Kougarok Road, we were headed inland, past the Nome dump. Oh, my gosh! Here were not 1, but 5 Slaty-backed Gulls in with the Glaucous and Glaucous-winged Gulls—plus 1 Vega form of the Herring Gull. Wow!

Alongside the road the river sparkled on its way to the sea. My spirits were definitely up. Spotted Sandpipers wagged their tails at us. A wandering Tattler blended in with the gray stones. A pair of Long-tailed Jaegers swooped by. High on a rocky crag a Gyrfalcon posed regally and displayed no concern whatsoever as we set up scopes to see her better. In 30 minutes she moved her head only to give us disdainful looks.



And, finally, we reached "the" hill. An Arctic Warbler called as we fanned out in a line and slowly began our trek up the mountain. My heart beat with excitement at the grandeur of the place. The utter magnitude of the mountain, the beauty, and the absolute silence were fantastic!

Up we went. Several American Golden Plovers flushed, a few juveniles among them. A Red-throated Loon flew over uttering its strange cry. The bushes were festooned with qiviut (musk ox hair)—a good sign.

Bristle-thighed Curlews are shy and sit tight; they don't flush. The birds this time of year (July) either were brooding eggs or, more likely, already had young chicks. That meant they would not be displaying, calling, or begging for attention, so they would be a challenge to find. But I was up for that.

We crossed the river bed toward the hill where the bird had last been seen and then continued on up to a rocky ridge. No sign of a curlew. We sat on the ridge and waited for the bird possibly to fly over us. Someone told us that curlews are curious birds and will often fly over to check people out (if they are not moving). So we sat—and listened and waited.

And then we saw something we weren't looking for—a bear, ambling down the opposite hill and picking at blueberries as it went. It reared on its hind legs and seemed to look straight at us. It was quite large and moved quickly. As he headed on up our ridge, we hurried down the other side all talking very loudly, just to let that bear know we were there. A Whimbrel flushed, but we didn't stop. I kept looking over my shoulder, but no bear seemed to be following us.

From the safety of the van, I looked longingly up that hillside and mentally put the "bird" on the list. Not my life list—that other list! The one with the Boreal Owl I'd hunted in Labrador, Newfoundland, British Columbia, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in mid-January. Ah, well! Maybe next time I'll see a curlew.

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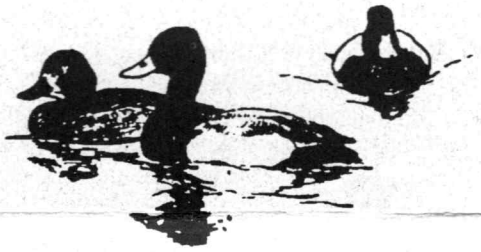

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